

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 660

By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie for her many achievements and contributions to society and religion.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated their professional careers and personal excellence to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, one such outstanding individual is Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, who evinces the greatest integrity and probity in each of her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, an expert on the theological historical struggles of black women in the church, Bishop McKenzie is well respected by civil rights advocates across the globe; and

WHEREAS, Bishop McKenzie was selected the first female bishop in the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in 2000 and again made history in 2005 when she became the first female president of the Council of Bishops and Titular Head of the denomination, shattering the stained glass ceiling; and

WHEREAS, she currently skillfully serves as the presiding prelate of the 13<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District, including the states of Kentucky and Tennessee, and has served as the chief pastor of the 18<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District of the AME Church, which comprises Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland in Southern Africa; and

WHEREAS, throughout her exemplary tenure as the 117th elected and consecrated bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop McKenzie has distinguished herself as a public-spirited citizen of the highest order and an exceptional asset to her community; and

WHEREAS, before hearing the divine call to the ministry, Vashti Murphy McKenzie served with acumen and alacrity as a journalist, in which position she earned the respect of her colleagues and readers alike due to the exemplary quality of her work; and

WHEREAS, Bishop McKenzie is an assiduous scholar who holds a Master of Divinity degree as well as a Doctor of Ministry degree; and

WHEREAS, the beloved granddaughter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., founder, Vashti Turley Murphy, Bishop McKenzie renders sterling service as the National Chaplain of that laudable organization and serves as a member of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Board of Trustees for Wilberforce University, and the National Advisory Board of the Family and Community Violence Prevention Program for historically black colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, because of her peerless leadership and tireless dedication to excellence, Vashti McKenzie was selected in 2009 to join a twenty-five member Advisory Council and share her vast wisdom and extraordinary insights on policy issues with the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives; and

WHEREAS, this stalwart servant of the Almighty is the celebrated author of *Not Without a Struggle: Leadership Development for African American Women in Ministry*, *Strength in Struggle: Leadership Development for Women*, *Journey to the Well*, and *Swapping Housewives: Rachel and Jacob and Leah*; and

WHEREAS, renowned across the nation, Bishop McKenzie was selected for an Honor Roll of Great African-American Preachers by a poll of national, civic, social, religious, and academic leaders; she has been featured in several national magazines, including *Time* and *Ebony Magazine*, and in 1997, she was listed as the top African American Female Preacher in the same publication; and

WHEREAS, an empowering and electrifying speaker, Bishop McKenzie has been invited to address the Democratic National Convention multiple times; and

WHEREAS, Bishop McKenzie's outstanding success as a preacher and church administrator, public servant, and civic leader is directly attributable to her reliance on the time-

honored values of hard work and common sense and her uncommon ability to work well with people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, Vashti Murphy McKenzie is an extremely giving person who often reaches out with compassion to people whom life has treated unkindly, and she epitomizes the ideal of the consummate professional, dedicated public servant, and reliable friend; and

WHEREAS, her many accomplishments aside, Bishop McKenzie is fortunate to share both love and companionship with her husband, Stan McKenzie, and their three children; and

WHEREAS, Bishop McKenzie is wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and she should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie for her many years of devoted public service, salute her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living his life with courage and conviction, and extend to her our best wishes for continued success in all her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.